

DAKOTA PACK

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD • SUMMER 2018

PATRIOT BANDOLEER

740th Transportation Company
supports U.S. Army munitions
readiness requirements



» TRAINING

- Training exercise preps 109th RSG for wartime mission
- 147th FSC cooks showcase talent in cooking competition

» DEPLOYMENTS

- 114th FW Airmen welcomed home
- 216th/200th Soldiers welcomed home

» ACHIEVEMENTS

- Officer/Warrant Officer of the Year
- SDARNG Soldier/NCO of the Year



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On the Cover

The 740th Transportation Company transports shipping containers of retrograde ammunition near Donner Pass, Calif., as part of Operation Patriot Bandleader during annual training, March 7. (Photo by 1st Sgt. Bill Meyer)



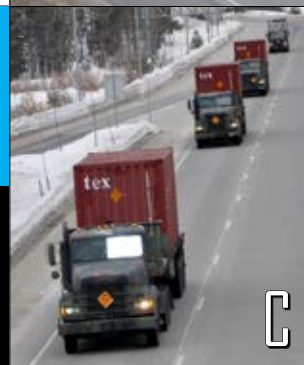
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Message from the Adjutant General

I want to begin this column by expressing my most sincere gratitude to the Soldiers, Airmen and families of the South Dakota National Guard. Your willingness to serve our great nation during these challenging times is a true demonstration of patriotism and selfless service.

On March 4, we welcomed home 126 Airmen of the 114th Fighter Wing who deployed as part of a Reserve Component Period deployment over the previous year. They represented 17 different career fields and had deployed to numerous locations in six foreign countries around the world as part of the RCP. Every one of these Airmen are to be commended for their professional and competent service throughout their six-month tours of duty. The 114th turned right around and deployed 172 Airmen to Nellis Air Force Base, March 4-24, for "Red Flag" training.

This will be followed by their Unit Effectiveness Inspection from May 31-June 5. To top it all off, the 114th will deploy 335 Airmen along with aircraft as a part of its Air Expeditionary Forces deployment this summer. The operational demands placed on the National Guard these days are phenomenal.

This would probably be a good place to mention that April was the Month of the Military Child. Every person who has ever served in the armed forces knows that their absence from home has an impact on their families. Our children didn't sign up to serve in the military, but their lives are certainly impacted by our decision to serve. If you haven't expressed your gratitude to your family members for the way their lives are impacted by your service, please take time to do so right now. Without our families' support we simply cannot do the things we do to support our state and nation.

On that note, we join the families of both the 200th Bridge Training Team and the 216th Firefighting Team in welcoming them home after completion of their nine-month boots on the ground deployments. Both of these teams performed their missions in a truly exemplary fashion, adding to the impressive legacy of the South Dakota National Guard.

It is so good to get you home! Please remember to be patient as you transition back into your normal lives. You and your family members have been apart for a long time and adjusting back to the way things were prior to your deployment (or something close to that) should not be taken for granted or forced. All good things take time.

It was a distinct honor to travel to Washington, DC to witness the presentation of the Reserve Family Readiness Award for the entire Army National Guard on March 23. The award was presented to our very own 153rd Engineer Battalion and its Forward Support Company by Mr. Robert Wilkie, the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. Lt. Gen. Tim Kadavy, director of the Army National Guard, provided remarks during the ceremony at the Pentagon as well. He commended the families of the 153rd for everything they've done to support their Soldiers during their deployment and since their return.

I'd like to congratulate Brig. Gen. Tom Croymans who took over as the assistant adjutant general of the SD Army National Guard on May 6. General Croymans' career exceeds 42 years of service - the first 14 of which were in the enlisted ranks. His extensive experience make him an excellent choice to lead the Army Guard in the days ahead. He's got big shoes to fill. Brig. Gen. Kevin Griesse served for just under five years as the assistant adjutant general-Army and has performed with true excellence during that entire period of time.

Year after year after year, the number of Superior Unit Awards earned by our Army Guard units increased under General Griesse's leadership. Most recently, 30 units were nominated, a feat unmatched by any other state. There's not even a close second. Also during Griesse's tenure, we earned First Place Gold and the Overall Winner in back-to-back years of the Army Communities of Excellence competition.

I am extremely thankful to both Brig. Gens. Griesse and Croymans for their willingness to serve in this critical role for our organization.

Speaking of general officers, it was an honor to witness the pinning ceremony during which Marshall Michels was promoted to the rank of brigadier general on May 11 in Rapid City. General Michels recently completed a two-year stint as the Army chief of staff and he exceeded all of my expectations while serving in that role.

His new assignment is director of the joint staff, taking over for Brig. Gen. Russ Walz who served in that capacity for the past two years. I am so thankful that General Walz was willing to relocate to Rapid City to perform that important role for our organization. He did a fantastic job and his fresh set of eyes really improved the way we do business at state headquarters. He has returned to Sioux Falls to take over as assistant adjutant general-Air. That transfer of authority ceremony will be covered in the next edition of the Dakota Pack.

I recently returned from Washington, DC where I had the opportunity to sit down with Lt. Gen. Tim Kadavy, the director of the Army National Guard, to discuss the overall personnel strength of the Army Guard. Nationally, the Army Guard is really struggling to achieve its required end strength. I am chairing a Readiness Advisory Committee developing potential courses of action to resolve the problem.

Fortunately we are doing a fantastic job in recruiting and retention in both the South Dakota Air and Army Guard. I am deeply appreciative for the role that each of you play in recruiting and retention. I fully endorse the concept that every one of us is a recruiter, as well as the fact that we all play an important role in retention. I applaud you and ask for your continued commitment in these areas.

In closing, I once again ask for your continued prayers for the safety and wellbeing of all of our Soldiers and Airmen, whether serving at home or abroad. I am extremely grateful for your service - as well as for the contributions that our families and employers make. Our state and nation are forever in your debt.



Sincerely,

Timothy A. Reisch
Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch
The Adjutant General

Message from the State Command Sgt. Maj.

I have been asked several times over the years, "Who is responsible for my career?" I tell everyone, you are ultimately responsible for your own career and personal development. Everyone should know there are mandatory professional education requirements, qualifications in your military occupational specialties or Air Force specialties, physical standards, marksmanship, civilian education and positions that you must attain to advance. In the Army Guard, we call it the total Soldier concept and in the Air Guard, it is total Airman. Everyone also has to understand that the promotion process is a competitive process and every day is an interview. The person who has knocked down all the barriers and is at the top of their game will be the one getting promoted.

To advance in your career, I believe you have to know your business, which means don't rest on your laurels. Know the changes in policies, procedures and regulations. Know yourself. What are your strengths and what are your weaknesses? You have to be able to step back and take an objective look at yourself and your performance, then ask yourself, "What I can I do better?"

Seek out mentors and ask them for an honest critique on where you can improve. Make goals, write them down and develop a plan how to attain them. If a person doesn't set goals then one can become stagnant. Watch other leaders, use the techniques you like and ignore the things you don't like about their leadership styles. Believe it or not, but I have learned a lot of what not to do over the years as well as what to do.

I also believe you should always be learning. That means reading books on leadership, not just military leadership but all leadership. Read about geopolitical issues, economics, culture and history. You can Google our National Military Leaders Reading Lists and see what they want their senior leadership to read. Read the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy, it will help you understand the why in what we are doing around the world.

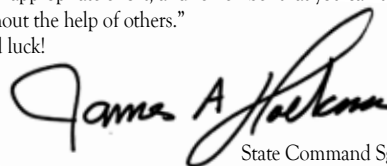
I even have some books you should read. For senior leaders I think we should all read "The Bathsheba Syndrome" by DC Ludwig. All leaders should read

"Athena Rising" by W. Brad Johnson, PhD and David Smith, PhD; and "Legacy - 15 Lessons in Leadership" by James Kerr. For the junior leaders, "Make Your Bed" by Ret. Admiral William H. McRaven.

I also suggest you look at the new SDNG Mentorship Program, which is on the South Dakota National Guard intranet page. This is another opportunity to reach out and seek honest feedback from mentors in our organization.

To make it really easy, I usually fall back on three simple rules from Lou Holtz: "Do the right thing, do the best you can, and always show people you care. You've got to make a sincere attempt to have the right goals to begin with, then go after them with appropriate effort, and remember that you can't really achieve anything great without the help of others."

Good luck!



State Command Sgt. Maj. James Hoekman



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Photo By Dan Simpson, August 21, 2017— Lusk, WY



Croymans named new Army Guard assistant adjutant general

Story by SDNG Public Affairs Office



RAPID CITY – Brig. Gen. Thomas Croymans is the new assistant adjutant general for the South Dakota Army National Guard.

A transfer of authority ceremony took place between Croymans and the outgoing assistant adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Kevin Griesse, at the Joint Force Headquarters Readiness Center on Camp Rapid, May 6.

As the assistant adjutant general, Croymans is responsible to the South Dakota National Guard's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, for strategic planning, strength management, troop readiness and mobilization support of the state's nearly 3,200 Army National Guard Soldiers.

Croymans, of Aberdeen, replaces Griesse, of Pierre, who served in the position since July 2013.

"Brig. Gen. Griesse has done a truly fantastic job leading the Army National Guard for almost five years," said Reisch. "I can't thank him enough for his dedication and hard work. Brig. Gen. Croymans is absolutely ready for this key assignment and I am confident he will continue to push the Army Guard to new heights."

"It's truly an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to serve this great organization and the best Soldiers in the entire Army National Guard," Croymans said. "It's been quite a journey from being the dispatcher at the 740th (Transportation Company) in Milbank to the assistant adjutant general in Rapid City. As each new assignment and opportunity came along, I always made it my goal to improve my skills and abilities as a Soldier and a leader in order to contribute to my unit and my organization. That philosophy has not changed."

Croymans began his military career in October 1975 enlisting in the

740th Transportation Company in Milbank. He spent the first 14 years of his career as an enlisted Soldier – attaining the rank of staff sergeant. He received his commission as a second lieutenant through the South Dakota Military Academy Officer Candidate School in December 1989 and was assigned as a transportation officer.

He has held various command and staff positions to include commander of the 1742nd Transportation Company, 88th Troop Command, 139th Brigade Support Battalion and 109th Regional Support Group. At the state headquarters level, Croymans served as the chief of staff, director of the joint staff and most recently as the land component commander.

Croymans has a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from South Dakota State University and a Masters in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College.

"I'm looking forward to working closely with the staff at JFHQ, and the leadership in the field, to develop strategies and policies that enhance readiness, provide opportunity and positively affect the culture," Croymans said. "Further, I look forward to getting out and visiting with Soldiers, observing training and doing everything in my power to ensure that our Soldiers and families are cared for and ready."

In his civilian career, Croymans is the regional roads engineer for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Great Plains Region.

"I look forward to the challenges and increased responsibility of being the ATAG and at the same time, am excited about the future," Croymans said.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Heather Trobee)

The new assistant adjutant general for the SD Army National Guard, Brig. Gen. Thomas Croymans, right, receives the colors from Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG, during a transfer of authority ceremony, May 6.

SDNG promotes Michels to brigadier general

Story by SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY – The South Dakota National Guard promoted Marshall Michels, of Rapid City, to the rank of brigadier general during a ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters, May 11.

Michels serves as the director of the joint staff and oversees joint strategic planning and training to enhance the readiness of the Army and Air Guard.

"I feel extremely blessed and humbled to receive this opportunity," said Michels. "I look forward to continuing to serve this great organization and to serve with the dedicated professionals of the South Dakota National Guard."

Guest speaker Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general for the SDNG, expressed his confidence in Michels to maintain the relationships and readiness for the SDNG.

"We are extremely fortunate to have an officer with Marshall Michels' education, experience and work ethic to assume this important role in our organization," said Reisch. "His qualifications are unmatched."

Michels' service in the military spans more than 35 years. A native of Vermillion, Michels enlisted into the South Dakota Army National Guard in 1983 as a combat medic with the 730th Medical Company. In 1988, he received his commission as a second lieutenant through the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at the University of South Dakota.

Michels served over three years on active duty with 2nd Armored Division and with the 1st Infantry Division during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

As a field artillery officer, Michels has held numerous command and staff positions to include commander, Alpha Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion; executive officer, 2-147th Field Artillery Battalion; S-3

officer, 147th Field Artillery Brigade; commander, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion; commander, 109th Regional Support Group; and chief of staff for the SDARNG.

Michels is a graduate from the University of South Dakota and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science and two Master's degrees: Business Administration from University of South Dakota and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College. Michels is also a graduate of the Joint Force Staff College, Advanced Joint Professional Military Education and the U.S. Air Force War College.



Brig. Gen. Marshall Michels

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114th Fighter Wing Airmen welcomed home

(Photo by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson)

Staff Sgt. Hunter Roberts, 114th Security Forces member, is congratulated by South Dakota's top leadership during a welcome home ceremony at Joe Foss Field, March 4.

Story by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra - 114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

SIoux FALLS - A welcome home ceremony was held at Joe Foss Field March 4, to recognize the Airmen of the 114th Fighter Wing who deployed as part of a Reserve Component Period deployment over the past 10 months.

One hundred and twenty-six Airmen from 17 different career fields deployed to several locations around the world as part of the RCP. While deployed, Airmen supported Operation Inherent Resolve or Freedom Sentinel throughout the U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Central Command, or U.S. Africa Command.

In attendance to welcome home and recognize the unit members were South Dakota Sen. John Thune and Rep. Kristi Noem. Also in attendance were South Dakota National Guard leadership, Gov. Dennis Daugaard and First Lady Linda Daugaard, and Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch. The audience of more than 1,200 included unit members, families and friends.

"I recognize the sacrifices that you and your families have made this past several months and it's a debt that we can never repay," said Noem.

South Dakota's leadership recognized the Airmen's sacrifice and dedication to support these foreign and domestic operations. While the missions these Airmen participated in varied, there was consistently one goal; to provide support to the full-time military forces they supplemented as fully trained and effective Airmen.

"Being back is great. It's almost surreal. I feel much more a part of the 114th now and it puts a whole new meaning to being in the National Guard. We train for so long, it's great to finally be able to put all of our skills to work and apply them to our day to day lives," said Staff Sgt. Gathin Veldhuizen, 114th Civil Engineer firefighter.

It is difficult for Airmen being deployed for long periods and can be equally as difficult for their family members.



(Photo by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson)

Master Sgt. Nichole Gruber, 114th Civil Engineer Squadron first sergeant, and her family visits with South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard and First Lady Linda during a welcome home ceremony at Joe Foss Field, March 4.

"At times it felt like it was longer than six months. Trying to be both parents, getting the kids to where they need to go in addition to working takes a lot," said Jodie Greer, wife of Senior Master Sgt. Shawn Greer. "We thankfully have great neighbors and family that were supportive and helped us navigate through the more stressful times during the deployment."

The unit offers many programs to assist these family members before, during, and after the deployments to include briefings on reintegration into civilian life for the members.

The first of the Airmen left for their RCP deployments in April of 2017 and returned in October, while the last groups left in July 2017 and returned home in February 2018.



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216th Soldiers return home from Romania, Bulgaria deployment

Story by Capt. Chad Carlson
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY – Three Soldiers with the 216th Engineer Detachment (Firefighting Team) were welcomed home by family and friends in Rapid City, May 16, after returning from duty in Romania and Bulgaria.

The Rapid City-based unit served nine months providing command and control of firefighting teams to provide fire protection of aviation assets, facilities and installations in the European Command area of operation.

This included firefighter support to Mihail Kogalniceanu, Romania, and Nevo Solo Training Area, Bulgaria, and being utilized as emergency first responders providing firefighter services to both structural base assets and aircraft and runway support.

“The mission was a complete success,” said Capt. Jared Bloomgren, 216th commander. “We set the new standard at both M.K. Air Base, Romania, and at NSTA, Bulgaria. We were praised for our work, our fast responses, lifesaving techniques, our professionalism, and our willingness to make both bases a safer and better place.”

Bloomgren, who led five firefighting teams from five other U.S. states, thanked South Dakota senior leaders and various commands for the support provided throughout the deployment. He then turned his attention and appreciation to the South Dakota Soldiers joining him - Sgt. 1st Class Austin Hagen, fire chief, and Staff Sgt. Robert Robertson, fire inspector.

“You two did a superb job on this deployment,” Bloomgren said to his team during the ceremony. “If it wasn’t for you, we would not have had the success we did on this deployment.”

State and local government leaders to include Lt. Gov. Matt Michels and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, SDNG adjutant general, also spoke to the 216th and their family members during the ceremony.

After thanking Bloomgren, Hagen and Robertson, Michels asked, by a show of hands how many in the audience had a dad who had been gone over the last ten months – and then spoke directly to the Soldiers’ young children and other family members in attendance.

“I want to thank you for sharing dad,” Michels said. “It’s very, very hard. And a number of us know how thankful we are for you, and mom, and for helping mom. It’s incredibly important, what you did, and all I’m asking is that you love them up a lot because they’ve missed you so much.”

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, this is the second deployment for the 216th, which also served in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from December 2003–June 2005.

“I’m very proud of the job you did over there,” Reisch said to the 216th during the ceremony. “You added to the great legacy of the South Dakota National Guard.”



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Heather Trobee)

Three Soldiers with the 216th Engineer Detachment (Firefighting Team) return to Rapid City, May 16, following a nine-month deployment to Romania and Bulgaria.



ABOVE: Staff Sgt. Robert Robertson, 216th Engineer Detachment (Firefighting Team), embraces his granddaughter at Rapid City Regional Airport.

(Photo by Capt. Chad Carlson)



LEFT: Sgt. 1st Class Austin Hagen holds his daughter following a homecoming ceremony at Camp Rapid in Rapid City, May 16.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)

200th Soldiers welcomed home from Syria



(Photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)

Staff Sgt. Brandon Deffenbaugh is greeted by his wife and daughters as 15 Soldiers with the 200th Engineer Company arrive in Pierre, May 19.

Story by SDNG Public Affairs Office

PIERRE – Fifteen Soldiers from the 200th Engineer Company were honored during a homecoming ceremony in Pierre, May 19, after serving for nine-months in Syria. The Soldiers served as a bridge training team where they emplaced and repaired bridges throughout the region to ensure freedom of movement for U.S. military and coalition forces.

State and local government leaders to include Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, Pierre Mayor Steve Harding and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, SDNG adjutant general, spoke to the 200th and their family members during the ceremony.

“What a great day it is to be in Pierre to welcome back these outstanding Soldiers,” said Reisch. “Congratulations to Capt. Francisco and Sgt. 1st Class Thorn for bringing everybody home safe.”

Lt. Gov. Michels also praised the team’s leadership and also thanked the Soldiers for the work they did in Syria.

“I want to thank all of you in this unit for building bridges, and I don’t mean the physical type,” Michels said. “There are a lot of bridges that are built with coalition forces, with people who are natives, who understand now our country through a different lens, not some sort of a media prism.

“It’s by building bridges, literally, so we can have coalition forces support individuals who yearn for freedom... for people that all they want to do is live their dreams,” Michels continued. “Freedom wins, freedom overcomes and it’s because of the dedication of all of you who are willing to build those bridges.

“The governor and I are so honored, as just regular people, to stand on the shoulders of all of you in this unit, and others, who have served proudly so that we can live our dreams and have them come true,” Michels ended.

The team’s commander, Capt. Mark Francisco, spoke of the Soldiers being ready for this deployment and successful completion of the mission.

“Ten months ago I stood before you and told you that we were ready, and like any SDNG unit, we were,” Francisco said. “We’ve had vast accomplishments, but the greatest has been the readiness to embark on such an endeavor.



(Photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)

Soldiers with the 200th Engineer Company (Bridge Training Team) stand for the team roll call during a welcome home ceremony.

“It starts with readiness at home,” he continued. “It begins with the Soldiers and their support network and moves on to the readiness throughout the unit.”

In July, the team members left for Fort Bliss, Texas, and a few weeks later they were in Syria building bridges – successfully building two major bridges within the first three weeks of being in theater.

During the team’s deployment, the unit emplaced eight bridges, conducted 78 bridge inspections, and completed 49 bridge repairs, to name a few. The Soldiers conducted 57 missions outside the protection of their base, totaled over 600 mission hours and traveled more than 8,500 miles throughout Syria.

“I’m very proud of the job you did over there,” Reisch said. “You added to the great legacy of the South Dakota National Guard. Thank God for the safe return of these Soldiers and continue to pray for all the Soldiers and Airmen we have deployed and all our service members around the world.”

SDNG Officer and Warrant Officer of the Year

Story by Capt. Bjarne Aanning - 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

RAPID CITY – First Lt. Jason Becker, Headquarters Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion, is this year's South Dakota National Guard Lieutenant of the Year. He received the Lt. Col. John J. Steele Award, which was established in 1968 to annually recognize the most outstanding lieutenant in the SDNG based on exceptional qualities of leadership, values and performance.

Becker serves as a physician's assistant and contributes to Soldier medical readiness for the battalion. His efforts helped to increase the overall medical readiness of the 1-147th to over 93 percent.

"First Lt. Becker is an extremely qualified officer who has received many accolades from his battery leadership," said Lt. Col. Phillip Stiles, 1-147th Battalion commander. "His proficiency and skills make him an excellence choice for the John J. Steele Lieutenant of the Year."

Becker said his experiences as an enlisted Soldier contribute to his success as an officer and strengthened his ability to form relationships with Soldiers in his unit.

"I had an advantage of being prior enlisted for eight years," said Becker. "That helped me understand some of the ground-level strategies, as well as being in the field artillery, where we are constantly in a state of readiness."

"As an officer, the reward is not only about gaining respect, but you also know how it feels when you ask for tasks to be completed," Becker added. "I think that helps make missions go a lot better."

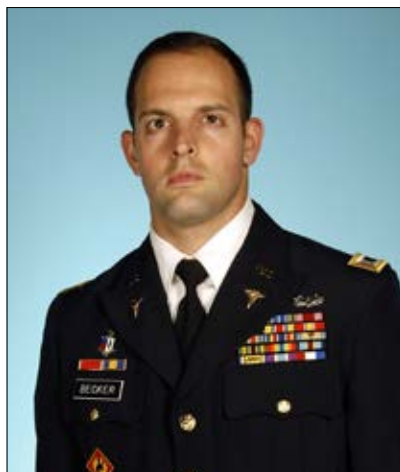
He credits his success in the competition to understanding how Soldiers are responsible for being ready for all of their mission essential tasks.

"You need to remember how to do tasks that are not just a part of your specific job in the military," said Becker. "The bigger picture is to help develop better Soldiers in general."

In addition to his responsibilities in the National Guard, Becker serves as a physician's assistant with Black Hills Orthopedic and Spine Center as the primary surgical team lead.

His professionalism as an orthopedic physician's assistant called him away, unexpectedly, from the award ceremony as he was tasked with operating on a patient in need back home.

"No matter what the problem or where my team is, I will try to take care of our patients," said Becker.



1st Lt. Jason Becker – Lieutenant of the Year

MITCHELL – Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joshua Brenden, Company B, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, is this year's South Dakota National Guard Warrant Officer of the Year. He received the Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael F. O'Connor Award, which was established to recognize the most outstanding warrant officer in the SDNG based on exceptional qualities of technical knowledge, leadership, dedication and initiative.

Brenden serves as the engineer equipment maintenance warrant responsible for overall maintenance for the company, as well as contributing support to the 139th Battalion.

"CW2 Brenden always performs his duties and accomplishes all assigned missions with the utmost professionalism," said Col. Doug Bogenhagen, 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade commander.



CW2 Josh Brenden – Warrant Officer of the Year

"His accomplishments and dedication to duty over the past year have definitely deserved him the distinction of being recognized as the most outstanding warrant officer of the year." "The warrant officers were questioned on things related to their career fields," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Ben Smetana, award selection board member. "They were also asked about the history of the warrant officer branch and current events."

The competitors were further evaluated on their accomplishments over the past year and how technically proficient they are at their jobs – even though Army warrants are technical experts in their specialized fields, they also help with training Soldiers and advising commanders. He enlisted in 2000 and earned his commission in 2011. He previously served on active duty helping units prepare for overseas service, and it was those experiences that helped set him apart from his competitors.

"Having the mentorship of the leaders above me to facilitate my career and to let me reach the goals I have in mind has been a big part of winning this award," said Brenden. "I want to use the information I have learned to train Soldiers around the state on the systems that I work with and meet readiness goals for the South Dakota National Guard."

Brenden uses his personal experiences to bring positive changes to the SDNG's use of property books and maintenance tracking.

"I've been working with our team to train Soldiers on programs brought out by the Army that will help streamline maintenance issues," he said.

On the civilian side, Brenden is active in his community and volunteers with the United Way, Boy Scouts of America, Future Farmers of America and the Mitchell Soccer Association.

SD Army Guard Soldier, NCO of the Year

Story by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce - SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY - The South Dakota Army National Guard evaluated four enlisted Soldiers and three non-commissioned officers, April 7-8, for the state's Best Warrior Competition, which names the Soldier and Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year, respectively. Sgt. Cory Staab, Detachment 1, 842nd Engineer Company, was named the 2018 SDARNG Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year and Spc. Bailey Ruff, Detachment 2, 842nd Engineer Company, the 2018 SDARNG Soldier of the Year. Traditionally, the competition is a three-day event that assesses the participants' ability to fulfill the total Soldier concept, which is designed to bring out the best in every Soldier through physical fitness, education and leadership, among other aspects. The winners were selected using a paper board this year due to inclement weather during the scheduled event.

"Mother nature made this year's competition very difficult," said State Command Sgt. Maj. James Hoekman, the SDNG's senior enlisted leader. "Most of the events they do are tied directly to battle drills and warrior tasks which requires intense physical training outdoors and it wasn't safe for them to compete."

The paper board review consisted of the competitors' major commands' evaluations, which resulted in cumulative scores based from their Army Physical Fitness Test, weapons qualification, awards, and military training and education, to name a few.

"It's been very humbling," said Staab. "I never thought I would be NCO of the Year and representing our state at regionals when I enlisted."

At regionals, they will be tested on a variety of skill sets, which can include warrior tasks and battle drills, written essays, uniforms and appearance, drill and ceremony, land navigation and map reading, first aid, weapon systems, physical fitness and general Army knowledge.

"Each of the next levels of competition is definitely an increase in difficulty," said Hoekman. "We go against seven other states at regionals and several of those states have Army Rangers, Special Forces and other infantry-type personnel, so they're competing against people

who perform these tasks every day."

The Region VI Best Warrior Competition is scheduled for May at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, where Staab and Ruff will represent the SDARNG against Soldiers from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota.

"It's been very humbling to be selected as this year's Soldier of the Year," said Ruff. "I look forward to proving myself at regionals - I want a good showing for our state."

Joining Ruff in the SDARNG Best Warrior Competition were Spc. Spencer Kirkpatrick, 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, the 2018 Soldier of the Year runner-up/alternate; Spc. Jesse Thorne, 235th Military Police Company; and Spc. Eric Sanders, 881st Troop Command.

Staab's fellow NCOs in the competition were Sgt. 1st Class Clint Sandness, SDARNG Medical Command, the 2018 NCO of the Year runner-up/alternate, and Sgt. Tyler Jacob, 82nd Civil Support Team.

"I look forward to the opportunity to compete at regionals," said Staab. "It's going to make me grow as a person and a leader, which will allow me to use the training and knowledge I learn there to be a better mentor for

my peers in my unit and the organization as a whole."

While Staab and Ruff will move on to represent South Dakota in the regional competition, and potentially nationally, it was the year leading up to the competition that ultimately affects the organization.

"When these Soldiers and NCOs see the intensity of the training they go through in the Best Warrior Competition, they get to bring those skills back to their units and impress upon them the importance of high-intensity, quality training," said Hoekman. "In today's operating domain around the world, our Soldiers have to be in the best physical shape and they need to be ready to fight if they have to."

On May 14-17, Ruff and Staab, competed in the Region VI BWC at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, against Soldiers from Alaska, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. Ruff won the Best Soldier Competition and will represent Region VI in the National Guard BWC in July.



Spc. Bailey Ruff - Soldier of the Year



Sgt. Cory Staab - NCO of the Year

SDNG celebrates the Month of the Military Child

Story by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra
114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

SIOUX FALLS – The South Dakota National Guard Child and Youth Program held a Princess and Super Hero Day Camp, April 7, at the Sioux Falls National Guard Armory. The event is part of celebrations for the Month of the Military Child.

The Month of the Military Child is celebrated annually in April to acknowledge the sacrifices and challenges children of military members face.

According to the SDNG Child and Youth Program, there are over 3,900 military youth affiliated with the SD Army and Air National Guard.

“Our military youth are impacted daily, whether their service member is home, deployed, at drill, or away attending training or school,” said Taryn Broomfield, SDNG Child and Youth Program lead coordinator.

Children attending donned princess and super hero costumes at the day camp where they participated in various activities. Those wearing princess costumes were treated to a “royal treatment” that included getting their hair, makeup, and nails done. Super heroes enjoyed their time going through an obstacle course testing their “super hero” skills. Four randomly selected children were able to win bicycles for attending the event.

“It’s a great event for children to meet other military kids and it’s a fun event for them,” said Senior Master Sgt. Dave Adams, 114th Communication Squadron.

As part of the event, the children were also given certificates acknowledging all the challenges they face as a military child.

“Month of the Military Child is an opportunity to celebrate and thank the military children for their service,” said Broomfield.

The SDNG Child and Youth Program’s goal is to support the social, emotional, and academic needs of military children and youth throughout the state. The program also provides resources and information to military youth and to their families and communities, as well as partners with other local and national organizations that serve youth as well.

For more information about the SDNG Child and Youth Program, visit their website at <http://sd.ng.mil/Resources/SMFS/CYP/Pages/default.aspx> or their Facebook page.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra)

Abbey Johnson, South Dakota National Guard Youth Council member, applies makeup to a child attending the Princess and Super Hero Day Camp, April 7.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra)

Brayden Frey, South Dakota National Guard Youth Council member, wearing a Flash costume, chats with children during the Princess and Super Hero Day Camp at the Sioux Falls National Guard Armory.

Training exercise prepares 109th RSG Soldiers for wartime mission

Story by Capt. Amber Symonds
109th Regional Support Group

CAMP DODGE, Iowa – Soldiers with the 109th Regional Support Group participated in a mission command training event at the Mission Training Center, Camp Dodge, Iowa, in March.

Throughout the exercise, the Rapid City-based RSG worked to train and synchronize its various staff positions and functional areas toward their warfighting readiness and domestic operations capabilities.

The unit underwent a collective staff exercise where the staff sections worked through a mission utilizing the military decision making process, or MDMP, and the development of an operations order. The operations order was later executed in a simulated event at the end of the training period.

“This is one of the most enjoyable, effective and successful AT’s (annual training) I’ve been a part of,” said Col. Michael Oster, RSG commander. “The Mission Training Center is one of the premier training facilities for the National Guard.”

The mission of the RSG is to provide life support and command and control for base operations. As part of its wartime mission, the RSG leads the reception, staging, onward movement and integration of supporting forces, managing facilities, and providing administrative, medical and logistical support for troop services on a base camp. This includes supporting units during homeland security and other civil support missions.

The RSG recently underwent a transformation, increasing the unit’s size by more than 20 positions, in a nearly 90-Soldier unit, and are following a completely restructured standing operating procedure.

“Based on a new mission set for the RSG, this is something they’ve never done before and it was an opportunity for us to follow new doctrine,” said Oster.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Couser, 109th RSG senior noncommissioned officer, there wasn’t one person who didn’t give their best effort.

“Many members of the unit are new to their duty positions or the unit all together, and they took this time to learn and grow,” he said. “It was remarkable to experience.”

Besides exercising the new duties and staff positions, unit members were able to train on



(Photo by Capt. Amber Symonds)

Soldiers with the 109th Regional Support Group conduct a course of action brief, during a mission command training exercise at the Mission Training Center, Camp Dodge, Iowa, March 19.



(Photo by Capt. Amber Symonds)

Soldiers with the 109th Regional Support Group conduct operations in protective masks during their mission command training exercise.

their basic Soldier skills such as crew-served weapons familiarization, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear, or CBRN, training and tactical combat casualty care, to name a few.

The Soldiers put their CBRN training into play during the culminating event, where the entire unit was wearing protective masks while conducting the mission.

According to Oster, in order to have a successful outcome for the exercise, the unit had to think about its role and responsibilities in today’s operating environment.

“We had to ask ourselves a couple questions,” he said. “What is it that we are responsible to do? Where do we fit on the battlefield – how does our mission compliment and address a shortcoming or a need? And how do we compliment what everyone else around us is doing?”

These questions helped to focus the unit’s staff sections, and by the end of the training the Soldiers came together to execute their mission.

“Just watching it all happen step-by-step was pretty impressive,” Oster said.



Cpl. Austin Eich, left, of Sioux Falls, a culinary specialist with the 147th Forward Support Company, serves up chicken Parmesan at the Army's annual Philip A. Connelly Competition, May 5.

COOKING FOR THE CONNELLY

147th FSC cooks showcase talent in cooking competition

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Mark VanGerpen
196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade

Cpl. Michael Morgan is a former Marine who joined the South Dakota National Guard in 2011. At the time, he didn't know how to cook. To change that, he joined the 147th Forward Support Company as a culinary specialist. A one-month course at Camp Rapid taught him the basics – how to bake, how to cook, how to hold a knife properly for making the right cut. He learned the skills necessary to cook for Soldiers.

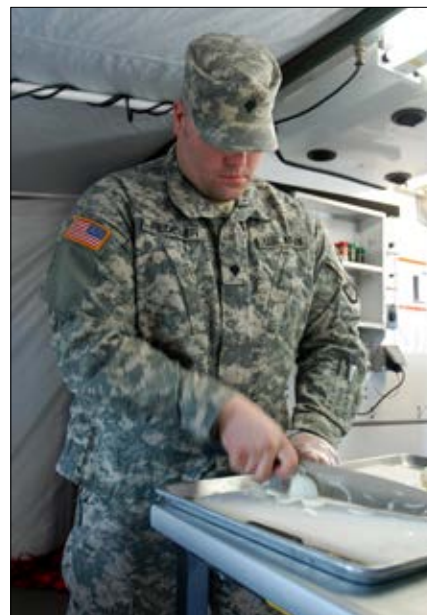
Now Morgan is the senior cook in the 147th's kitchen, and he put seven years' experience to the test on May 5, when he and the rest of the mess team served up 100 plates of their best meals for the Philip

A. Connelly Competition at the Brig. Gen. Ernie Edwards Readiness Center in Watertown.

The Connelly Competition is an annual exercise that tests Army cooks' ability to build a complete meal for dozens of Soldiers in the close, cramped quarters of a containerized kitchen. It's both a challenge and a chance to cook in true-to-life deployment conditions and produce quality food for Soldiers in the field.

"This competition enables us to showcase our commitment to service, and to our Soldiers," said Sgt. 1st Class Donally Kranz, the unit's culinary management noncommissioned officer. "We're more than just robots showing up and warming up a meal. We're building these meals for these guys because it impacts morale here and downrange, when they're looking forward to that hot meal coming every day."

Judges at the Connelly Competition evaluate the mess section in ten categories: sanitation; food safety; water safety; non-commissioned officer development; equipment knowledge and maintenance; presentation; portion size; temperature and taste.



ABOVE LEFT: Spc. Evan Werkmeister, of Mitchell, a culinary specialist with the 147th Forward Support Company, lays out chicken to be cooked.

ABOVE: Spc. Brandon Fedeler, of Dell Rapids, a culinary specialist with the 147th Forward Support Company, dices an onion while preparing a meal.



LEFT: Spc. Tyler Loterbauer, of St. Cloud, Minn., a culinary specialist with the 147th Forward Support Company, adds milk to a cheesecake recipe.

One of the biggest challenges is sanitation, Morgan said. Keeping food clean in the field – in a pint-sized, airy mess tent – is both difficult and critically important. An unsanitary meal could have a huge impact on mission readiness.

“We could take out a whole battalion if we’re not sanitary,” Morgan said. “We could make a lot of people sick. So we’re big on cleanliness.”

Other challenges can quickly compound the pressure on Army cooks. With the heat generated by all the cooking, baking, grilling, frying and boiling, a containerized kitchen gets hot, fast. A particularly hot day could make life miserable for a cook.

Working with sharp knives in such close quarters doesn’t help, either. Everyone in the tent needs to constantly be aware of where the others are standing or moving so nobody gets hurt.

“From working together, we’ve kind of learned how each other moves,” Morgan said. “If we didn’t work as a team, people would get hurt.”

To combat the stress, the cooks play music in the kitchen. They joke

around. They may sneak a dessert for themselves every now and then. But Spc. Evan Werkmeister, a culinary specialist with the 147th, said the best part is seeing the effect a well-cooked meal can have on a unit.

“It’s great watching how people react,” he said. “You can see morale improve by how Soldiers react after they eat.”

At its core, the competition celebrates culinary excellence through recognition of food service programs. Established March 23, 1968, it was named for the late Philip A. Connelly, former president of the International Food Service Executives Association.

Kranz added that it’s also an exercise in preserving the military’s legacy for food service.

“A lot of the judges were cooks themselves. Some are retired military,” he said. “Those people were the glory of the section in their day, so if you make it past them, you’re good.”

The 147th cooks took state honors at the competition. Next they’ll represent South Dakota at the regional level. If they win there, they’ll compete at the national level against the best Army cooks in the nation.

OPERATION PATRIOT BANDOLEER

740th Transportation Company supports U.S. Army munitions readiness requirements

Story by Capt. Chad Carlson
SDNG Public Affairs Office

A South Dakota Army National Guard unit transported shipping containers of retrograde ammunition from California to depots in Nevada and Utah as part of Operation Patriot Bandoleer during their annual training in March. Soldiers of the Milbank-based 740th Transportation Company, and its detachment in Aberdeen, supported U.S. Army munitions readiness requirements while enhancing knowledge and skills throughout the operation.

The 740th Transportation Company transports shipping containers of retrograde ammunition near Donner Pass, Calif., as part of Operation Patriot Bandoleer during annual training, March 7. (Photo by 1st Sgt. Bill Meyer)



(Photo by 1st Sgt. Bill Meyer)

Soldiers from the 740th Transportation Company convoy on a stretch of highway near Salt Lake City, Utah, March 9, to pick up shipping containers of retrograde ammo.

“Operation Patriot Bandoleer provided a real world operation and tangible mission for our Soldiers,” said Capt. Terry Berndt, 740th company commander. “Supporting the retrograde mission was invaluable to training our unit and Soldiers.”

OPB is a multi-component logistic event that supports the Army repositioned stocks program, involving the movement of thousands of tons of munitions and war reserve material.

Collectively, Guard units from seven states moved 483 containers, primarily from the Military Ocean Terminal Concord (MOTCO), California, to six different depots and arsenals across the nation.

The 740th hauled 60 of the containers from MOTCO to the Hawthorne Army Depot, Nevada, and Tooele Army Depot, Utah, experiencing numerous variables and challenges on the way.

“From the mountainous terrain and winter weather conditions at Donner Pass (northern Sierra Nevada) to bumper-to-bumper traffic in California, our operators saw just about every driving scenario imaginable,” Berndt said. “When you combine the varying conditions with the long hours, long distances and realistic cargo, OPB was a tremendous training opportunity for us.”

Aside from road time, OPB provided hands-on training ranging from

logistical planning and loading operations to maintenance support and command and control.

“Missions like OPB provide tremendous training for our transportation units, providing leaders an opportunity to plan and Soldiers an opportunity to execute METL-focused missions in support

of a national exercise,” said Lt. Col. Tim Schlotterback, battalion commander of the 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, SDARNG. “The 740th demonstrated outstanding performance and achievements at OPB.”

Upon completing their OPB mission, the 740th stopped at Camp Guernsey, Wyoming, on their way home where the unit conducted tactical training lanes where mission essential tasks ranging from tactical convoys to performing field maintenance were evaluated.

By the time the 740th arrived back home, they had logged more than 300,000



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Tynna Bain)

A container of ammunition is loaded onto a flatbed trailer as part of Operation Patriot Bandoleer, at the Military Ocean Terminal Concord, Calif., March 6.

combined miles on their M-915 semi-tractor trailers.

“The professionalism and exceptional work ethic of the Soldier’s in the 740th is a great reflection on the unit, battalion and South Dakota Army National Guard,” Schlotterback said. “I look forward to both truck companies (740th and 1742nd TC) having the opportunity to participate in this exercise in the future.”

New Mentorship Program underway for SDNG

By Maj. Carol Jordan

Mentorship Committee Chair, Diversity Council - Joint Force Headquarters

Many of you have recently taken a command climate survey and may have encountered questions similar to these: In my organization, mentoring is available to those who want it; My supervisor provides most of my mentoring; I receive the counseling and coaching needed to advance in my career.

Believe it or not, your command, even at the highest levels, is listening. Brig. Gen. Croymans, assistant adjutant general-Army, is invested in developing a way for mentorship to be addressed in the South Dakota Army National Guard.

A subcommittee has been developed to find ways to make tools more accessible and available for commanders and subordinates to learn more about mentorship and career management to continue to develop our organization into a great place to work and grow and into the top National Guard organization in the nation.

We are beginning by seeing where we are. Mentorship has been occurring throughout our ranks, though we may not always recognize it. But there may be times, especially during transitions, when we do have Soldiers who may slip through the cracks and not know what they have available to them. So we are beginning our efforts to shape the mentoring culture in our organization by defining a couple of terms and highlighting some existing programs. Also, look to our Mentorship Corner in the Dakota Pack for tips to share. To begin let's look at defining mentorship vs. career development.

Mentorship is the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect. (AR 600-100, FM 6-22 Chap 3-17) There is also the Army Mentorship Handbook out there and available online. But really, mentorship is about relationships, whether it is in your professional life or your personal life.

Career development is for managing your career and some of the tools out there for that include DA Pam 600-3 Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management, which "does not prescribe the path of assignment or educational assignments that will guarantee success but rather describes the full spectrum of developmental opportunities an officer can expect throughout a career" and Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-25 Personnel-General U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide.

So much of what make our organization great is its mixture of full-time and part-time Soldiers. But it is also part of the challenge - in forming lasting and lengthy relationships that it takes to develop the level of trust needed for a really good mentor/mentee relationship.

Long story short, career development is about developing a career. Mentorship is about developing a person.

"Mentoring is a key part of our talent management strategy. It is one of our most important leader development initiatives for both mentors and mentees. In fact, developing others is a core principle of leadership. Mentoring is also about leaving a legacy and preparing for the future at the same time. It is an important part of how our organizations pass knowledge from one generation to another." - Michael E. Williamson, Lt. Gen., USA (Ret.), former Army DACM.

Engineer wins Van Autreve

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

Sgt. Richard Buechler received a national award from the Army Engineer Association recognizing outstanding military service at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, April 20. Buechler, who serves with the Madison and De Smet-based 211th Engineer Company, received the Van Autreve Award, which recognizes junior-enlisted personnel contributions and service to U.S. Army engineers. Named for the fourth sergeant major of the Army, Leon. L. Van Autreve, the award is presented annually to a Soldier in the

U.S. Army, Army Reserve and National Guard.

"To win the Van Autreve Award for the National Guard component was an incredible feat, one that I was not sure I would be a contender for," Buechler said. "To win this award is very overwhelming and reassuring of the hard work I have done over my career."

Buechler was selected for the honor based on leadership recommendations for his outstanding performance as a Soldier and his skills as a combat engineer.

"Sgt. Buechler always performs his duties and accomplishes all assigned missions with the utmost professionalism," Lt. Col. Dennis Bickett, commander for the 153rd Engineer Battalion, said. "His accomplishments and dedication to duty over the past year have definitely earned him the distinction of being recognized."

The Van Autreve Award is one of five engineer awards presented annually. Award selection areas include training and education, leadership skills, personal growth, management experience and other discerning areas in the overall selection process.

"Sgt. Buechler's nomination packet highlights the level of commitment which he brings not only to his military assignments, but in his efforts in his local community as well," Col. Doug Bogenhagen, commander of the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, said. "His accomplishments make him an outstanding recipient for this distinguished award."

"One of my favorite things about serving in the 211th is the leadership," Buechler said. "The amount of knowledge and experience they have to offer for new troops and those of us new leaders is by far the best."

"It's an honor and a privilege to be recognized on the regimental level and to be able to represent the 211th and their ability to mold great Soldiers and leaders," Buechler added. "The opportunities that are available [in the South Dakota National Guard] are endless and the ability to create opportunity is yours for the taking if you work hard enough."



Sgt. Richard Buechler, 211th Engineer Company, receives the Van Autreve Award at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., for his contributions and service to U.S. Army engineers. (Courtesy Photo)

We all may need help from time to time

By Chaplain (Col.) Lynn Wilson
Joint Force Headquarters

When I was a young boy living in Clark, South Dakota, my folks noticed that I began limping. It was discovered I had pertheas disease, where the hip socket is flat rather than round. From ages 6-10½, I couldn't walk. I was unable to get around without the use of crutches.

I keep those crutches as a reminder that we all need help to get around from time to time. Perhaps the most dangerous myth is that we can make it in life without someone else. Let's touch on a few more myths that need to be addressed.

1) "The only opinion that matters is my own." For those of us who are strong-willed, we fall into a tendency to believe if we've expressed our opinion, that's the only opinion that matters. How untrue.

The reason we stress diversity in the military so much? Is because we need it! We need a diverse force if we want to have an accurate view of a diverse world. Our great Guard is even better if we have more females and more diverse nationalities who can aid our decision making.

2) "Our Soldiers and Airmen should just appreciate what they have without needing to be thanked." Again, how completely false! Author and motivational teacher Dr. Alan Zimmerman recently wrote, "Without verbalized appreciation, feelings of 'what's the point' and 'why bother' start to take over.

If you were to look into the hearts and minds of the average employee, you'd probably hear something like this, "I've been known to say, 'I don't want any pats on the back—just put it in my check.' Well, don't believe it. It's a crock! Regardless of how I may act, I do care a great deal what you and others think of me and what I do." Let's make a goal of not letting a single day go by from here on out without thanking someone in our military for the selfless sacrifice they make.

3) "Strong people don't break. It's only the weak ones that have suicidal thoughts or need counseling." There is no bigger myth than this! Not long after my son's birth in 2008, my own past of being sexually abused by a family member when I was young started to get the best of me.

I took my wife's tremendous advice and sought counseling, utilizing Military OneSource to get some excellent counseling from Mr. Bob Holmes at Behavioral Health Center. It was one of the best things I ever did. But there are still some in our military who tend to think "Those who seek out counseling are weak. Strong people can solve their problems by themselves." But to use a physical analogy, if you broke your leg, would anyone be so stupid as to say, "If you're strong you won't need a doctor!

You can just get better on your own!" No one in their right mind would say that about the human body. So why do we still say that about the human brain? All of us have low moments. All of us have our 'breaking points.' Perhaps the reading of this Chaplain's Corner will encourage you to be strong enough to reach out to the tremendous resources available in our state for Airmen, Soldiers and families.

Please take a look at the resources below, utilize when needed, and God's blessings upon your summer!

Dir. Psychological Health
Lt. Col. Amber Heinert
605.390.5434

Wing Director of
Psychological Health
Kelly Christensen
605.988.5539

Suicide Prevention Lifeline
800.273.8255

Chaplain Corp
Chaplain Lynn Wilson
605.431.5182

Military One Source
800.342.9647
(12 free counseling
sessions)



Lynn J. Wilson

Chaplain (Col.) Lynn Wilson
State/Full-time Support Chaplain

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SDNG recognizes individuals making positive impacts on family readiness



Jennifer Powers, an international speaker, coach and best-selling author, speaks at the State Family and Youth Symposium in Sioux Falls.



Kristi Palmer uses science experiments as team building exercises for the youth attending the State Family and Youth Symposium.

Story and photos by Capt. Chad Carlson – SDNG Public Affairs Office

The South Dakota National Guard's Service Member and Family Support held their annual State Family and Youth Symposium and Awards Banquet in Sioux Falls, March 24-25. The event brought together current and former Soldiers, Airmen, family members and civilians, all who volunteer in various capacities supporting the SDNG, for a weekend of training and an evening of recognition.

"I want to thank you all for being the heart of our program and for the tremendous support you have given to the SDNG, to our service members and their families," said Lt. Col. Brendan Murphy, SDNG's Service Member and Family Support director, to the volunteers attending. "We would not be able to be a world-class organization without you."

The training provided during the symposium included a range of informative and motivational speakers including: Dana Litwin, a transformational coach and strategic advisor in team building and environmental conservation; Jennifer Powers, an international speaker, coach and best-selling author on creating more control over life; Bob Prentice, an author, corporate trainer and life coach with lessons on turning negatives into positives; Jason Schechterle, a retired Phoenix police officer who trains audiences on how to persevere through adversity; Detective Derek Kuchenrither of the Sioux Falls Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force spoke on social media awareness and online dangers and predators; and Personal Financial Counselor Marli Erickson concluded the training with sessions for both the youth and adults on being financially aware.

Several awards presented during the weekend recognizing both service members and civilian volunteers included:

Guard Family of the Year: Presented to any active or retired SDNG member and their family that shows outstanding and exceptional service through volunteering to the SMFS Family Readiness Program.

- SDARNG: The Rodriguez Family (Capt. Paul Rodriguez and his wife, Leslie, and children, Zoey and Easton) of Rapid City
- SDANG: The Curley Family (Col. Kevin Curley and his wife, Daneen) of Sioux Falls

Volunteer of the Year: Presented to one Army and one Air Guard volunteer that has shown outstanding and exceptional service to the SMFS Family Readiness Program.

- Becky Thompson and Courtney Armstrong

Military Member of the Year: Presented to one Air Guard and one Army Guard military member that shows outstanding and exceptional service to the SMFS Family Readiness Program. Their knowledge and assistance has aided the progression of family readiness within their unit and/or state.

- SDARNG: Staff Sgt. Kayla Morris, 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Rapid City
- SDANG: Tech. Sgt. Brittne Bunkers, 114th Force Support Squadron, Sioux Falls

Family Program Community Purple Award: Presented to a community group or organization that best exemplifies the true meaning of "The Purple" concept of the Joint Family Program by working with both Air and Army Guard (Purple means Air & Army jointly).

- Militiamen Veterans Motorcycle Club (VMC), Flatlander's Chapter - Brookings

The Gold Award: Presented to a person (can be retired military member from any branch of service or non-military person) showing long-term, consistent, and dedicated support by volunteering with the SDNG Family Readiness Program and within their community.

- Kristi "Cricket" Palmer, Sturgis

Youth Volunteer Award: Presented to an Army or Air National Guard youth volunteer (14-18 years old) who exhibits exemplary commitment to and support of the National Guard Youth Program, their school and community. Serves as a role model for military youth.

- Brianna Neugebauer, Rapid City

Youth Development Volunteer Award: Presented to any youth program volunteer, regardless of military affiliation, who has made a significant impact in the development and support of the SDNG Youth Program mission.

- Corey Jennings, Rapid City

Unit of the Year Award: Presented to an Air Guard and Army Guard unit that shows outstanding and exceptional dedication to the development and progression of Family Readiness within their unit.

- The 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, Pierre

Soldiers receive citizenship award



Sgt. 1st Class Neal Stratman, right, Capt. Carl Stearns, middle right, and Sgt. 1st Class Matt Tjaden receive the Outstanding Citizen Award by Police Chief Matt Burns, Sioux Falls Police Department, in Sioux Falls, April 26. (Courtesy photo)

Story by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce – SDNG Public Affairs Office

Three South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers received the Outstanding Citizen Award by the Sioux Falls Police Department at the Law Enforcement Center in Sioux Falls, April 26.

Sgt. 1st Class Neal Stratman, 2nd Battalion, 196th Regional Training Institute, Sgt. 1st Class Matt Tjaden, 1742nd Transportation Company, and Capt. Carl Stearns, 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, received the award from Police Chief Matt Burns, Sioux Falls Police Department, for their honorable actions on March 7.

The Outstanding Citizen Award is given to those who demonstrate loyalty, dedication, attitude and integrity, as well as exemplary service, to their community.

The three Soldiers were traveling home after work when they witnessed a two-vehicle car collision on West 60th Street North, which resulted in one person being critically injured and two others with minor injuries. Stearns immediately called 911 while Stratman began to assess the collision and Tjaden conducted traffic control. The drivers of both vehicles were male and had minor injuries, but the wife of one driver was trapped in the passenger seat and unconscious upon arrival.

Stearns went to his vehicle and retrieved his personal first aid bag and a blanket while Stratman grabbed a towel from his vehicle. Tjaden was slowing down vehicles on the street and directing them away from the collision until the first responders arrived.

The injured were transported to the Sanford Medical Center in Sioux Falls for medical treatment.

"The best part is knowing we helped those people," said Stratman. "It's been very humbling to receive this award and for my stepsons to see what kind of impact we can have in our community."

"I was truly proud to see these two noncommissioned officers work as a team," said Stearns. "It was so amazing to see how other people just stood around at the scene and waited to take direction from the Guard Soldiers in uniform."

153rd FRG receives national award



Members of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 153rd Engineer Battalion and its Family Readiness Group accept the 2017 Reserve Family Readiness Award for the Army National Guard from Department of Defense officials at a ceremony March 23, at the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes. (Courtesy photo)

Story by SDNG Public Affairs Office

For the fifth time in six years, the Department of Defense awarded a South Dakota Army National Guard unit with the Reserve Family Readiness Award for the Army National Guard. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs presented the Huron and Parkston-based 153rd Engineer Battalion and its Forward Support Company with the award for 2017 at the Pentagon, March 23.

The annual award is presented to one unit from each of the seven Reserve components that demonstrate excellence in engaging with and supporting their members' families. Units come from the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and the Coast Guard Reserve.

"The RFRA program was established in 2000 to recognize the top unit in each Reserve Component that demonstrated outstanding family readiness while maintaining superior mission readiness," said Robert Wilkie, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

Volunteer team leaders from the Huron and Parkston family readiness groups joined state and national military representatives for the awards program at the Pentagon.

"Every Soldier that deploys needs to feel assured that their family is taken care of," said Lt. Col. Dennis Bickett, 153rd commander. "Having an excellent family readiness group goes to great lengths to assuage concerns that deployed Soldiers have for their families back home. This award demonstrates that fantastic job the Headquarters and Forward Support Company Family Readiness Group did while the 153rd was deployed to the Middle East."

"When units are deployed, the FRG is a connection to others going through the same stresses," Bickett said. "It is also a resource for families to share information and solve problems. When a unit has a solid FRG, officers, NCOs and Soldiers can focus on preparing the unit rather than worrying about how their family will be supported during a deployment."

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